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ABSTRACT

The potential value of the student teaching experience was investigated by examining attitudes of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors toward objectives and skills to be achieved during student teaching. A literature search revealed three broad categories of skills that should be acquired during student teaching: (1) instruction; (2) class management; and (3) personal and professional growth. Subjects of the study were 28 student teachers, 22 cooperating teachers, and 11 university supervisors. Results showed that student and cooperating teachers had significantly similar perceptions about the importance of class management objectives and about achievement of objectives in all categories. Student teachers and university supervisors had significantly similar perceptions about the importance of instruction objectives and about the achievement of class management objectives. Cooperating teachers and university supervisors had a statistically significant relationship only on the achievement of class management objectives. (FG)

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STUDENT TEACHING OBJECTIVES:

THEIR IMPORTANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This investigation, which examined perceptions of student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors about the importance and achievement of student teaching objectives, revealed that for both importance and achievement of objectives, student teacher and cooperating teacher perceptions were more closely related than those of any other two triad groups.

STUDENT TEACHING OBJECTIVES: THEIR IMPORTANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Understanding the potential value of the student teaching experience is enhanced by examinations of attitudes or opinions held by student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors (the student teaching triad) about student teacher expectations and about the similarities or differences in these perceptions. This investigation examined perceptions of the triad about the importance of commonly accepted objectives of student teaching and about the degree of student teacher achievement of these objectives.

The purpose of the student teaching experience has not been the topic of many research efforts. However, a substantial number of publications have included listings of goals for student teachers. A survey of literature about student teaching disclosed over 350 objectives which, for the purposes of this research, were categorized into the broad categories of (1) instruction, (2) class management, and (3) personal and professional growth. Although the literature revealed there was no lack of objectives for the student teaching experience, a noticeable void did exist in research about the importance of such objectives or their achievement by student teachers. The objectives used in this study were determined from content analysis of the objectives identified in the literature followed by a pilot study.

Instruction

1. Plan units of work and daily lessons which are appropriate to the situation (Bennie, 1972; Gallemore, 1979). (planning lessons)

2. Utilize oral and written communication skills which are clear and logical (Ishler, 1974). (communication)

3. Apply facts and theories learned in professional preparation courses in light of their practicality, feasibility, and effectiveness in a given situation (Ciampa, 1975). (application of facts)

4. Demonstrate competence in subject matter (Clothier & Kingsley, 1973; Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1976). (subject matter competence)

5. Adapt instruction to meet students' individual differences in interests, problems, and developmental patterns (Bennie, 1972; Clothier & Kingsley, 1973; Tittle, 1974). (individual differences)

6. Demonstrate resourcefulness and creativity in presenting effective teaching-learning experiences (Bennie, 1972; Tittle, 1974). (resourcefulness)

7. Utilize appropriate techniques for evaluation of student progress (Bennie, 1972; Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1976; Ishler, 1974). (evaluation of students)

Class Management

8. Demonstrate the ability to conduct effectively the daily routines of classroom management (Bennie, 1972; Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1972; Tittle, 1974). (class management)

9. Demonstrate the ability to handle student discipline problems effectively (Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1976). (discipline)

10. Demonstrate effectiveness in initiating and sustaining a productive learning environment (Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1976). (learning environment)

11. Respond with sensitivity and poise to unpredictable disruptions in normal routines (Woods, Dick, & Mauries, 1973). (disruptions in routine)

Personal and Professional Growth

12. Evaluate one's teaching effectiveness in relation to one's objectives (Ciampa, 1975; Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1976; Tittle, 1974; Woods, Dick, & Mauries, 1973). (self-evaluation)

13. Demonstrate the ability to be self-directed and to solve problems (Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1976). (self-direction)

14. Demonstrate a commitment to continuous and professional and personal growth (Bennie, 1972; Ciampa, 1975; Woods, Dick, & Mauries, 1973). (professional growth)

15. Demonstrate positive personal characteristics such as a pleasing personality, a sense of ease and naturalness, poise and self-confidence, and use of good judgment in dress and interpersonal relations (Ciampa, 1975; Engelage, Scheer, & Tuning, 1976; Ishler, 1974). (personal characteristics)

The literature about interaction between the student teacher and the cooperating teacher supported the commonly held view that the cooperating teacher strongly influences the attitude and behavior of the student teacher (Baer, 1976; Garner, 1973; Mott, 1976). Research about interaction between the student teacher and the university supervisor has been meager. However, studies that have been conducted about student teacher-university supervisor interaction indicated the university supervisor has limited influence on the student teacher (Andrews, 1976; King, 1974). Although some differences in the conclusions existed, most of the investigations about relationships among student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors supported the generalization that cooperating teachers exerted the greater influence on student teachers.

Method

Subjects for the study were 28 student teachers, 22 cooperating teachers, and 11 university supervisors (N = 61). Near the end of the student teaching experience, triad members completed a data collection instrument which called for them to rank the objectives according to importance and to rate these objectives according to the degree of student teacher achievement (achieved, partially achieved, not achieved).

A mean rank value for both the importance and the achievement of the objectives was calculated for each objective for each respondent group and for each category of objectives (instruction, class management, and personal and professional growth). The Kendall tau correlational technique was used to determine correlation among mean ranks assigned by respondent groups for both the importance and the achievement of objectives in these categories.

Results

Table 1 summarizes the rankings of perceptions about the importance of the categories of objectives. The mean rank assigned

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Insert Table 1 About Here

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by the triad groups for objectives in the instruction category was 6.3, which resulted in this category of objectives being considered more important, on an average, than those in the class management or the personal and professional growth categories.

The Kendall tau correlation coefficient for student teacher perceptions and university supervisor perceptions in the instruction category (.683) indicated a significant relationship at the .05 level of confidence. Student teacher perceptions also were significantly related (tau = .667) at the .05 level of confidence to those of cooperating teachers in the class management category.

Table 2 summarizes the rankings of perceptions of triad groups about the achievement of the categories of objectives. The mean rank

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Insert Table 2 About Here

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assigned by the triad groups in the instruction category was 9.4; the mean rank in the class management category was 6.5. Objectives in the personal and professional growth category received a mean rank of 7.2. Objectives in the instruction category, considered by the triad as a whole and by each separate group in the triad as most important of the three categories, were perceived least completely achieved. Class management objectives were perceived most completely achieved.

More similarity existed among perceptions about the three categories of objectives regarding the degree of achievement of the objectives than about the importance of those objectives. While group differences existed in ranks assigned individual objectives within the class management category, the order of rank of achievement (tau = 1.000) of those objectives was the same for all groups. Perfect correlations also occurred between the order of rank of achievement in the personal and professional growth category assigned by student teachers and that assigned by cooperating teachers.

Student teachers and cooperating teachers also had similar views about objectives in the instruction category. A tau of .634 was significant at the .05 level of confidence.

The class management category of objectives received perfect correlations among all triad groups. Perfect correlation also was found in the personal and professional growth category between perceptions of student teachers and those of cooperating teachers. Perceptions of university supervisors about the achievement of objectives in the personal and professional growth category were not significantly related to either perceptions of student teachers or those of cooperating teachers.

Discussion

The current research supports the expectation that perceptions of student teachers and those of cooperating teachers would be more closely related than those of either student teachers and university supervisors or cooperating teachers and university supervisors. Student teachers and cooperating teachers had significantly similar perceptions about the importance of the class management objectives and about the achievement of each of the categories of objectives. Student teachers and university supervisors had significantly similar perceptions about the importance of the instruction objectives and about the achievement of the class management objectives. Cooperating teachers and university

supervisors had a statistically significant relationship only about the achievement of class management objectives.

An explanation for cooperating teachers and student teachers having similar perceptions about the importance of class management objectives might be that those two groups were more closely tied to the actual teaching-learning environment. They were responsible for the management of the class, while the university supervisor was an occasional observer of the class. This difference in roles logically could influence the perceptions of the triad groups. Perhaps student teacher and university supervisor perceptions about the importance of the instruction objectives were more closely related than student teacher and cooperating teacher perceptions because of the involvement of the student teacher and the university supervisor in the professional preparation courses at the university which dealt with instruction.

Perceptions of student teachers and cooperating teachers about the achievement of the objectives in the instruction and the personal and professional growth categories were more closely related than those of any other two triad groups. This phenomenon may be related to the necessary limitedness of university supervisor visits to the student teaching center. The cooperating teacher was in a better position to view the consistency with which the student teacher achieved the objectives.

Analyzing the categories of objectives by looking at mean ranks assigned by triad groups indicated a noticeable discrepancy between the perceived importance of objectives and the perceived achievement of the same objectives. Each subject group perceived the instruction category more important than the other categories; and all groups agreed that, overall, these objectives were least well achieved. Perhaps the eight-week period of student teaching was not sufficiently long for student teachers to gain competence in the objectives within the instruction category. In addition, the often-heard assumption that teachers need "control" of the class before learning can occur might account for the class management objectives receiving higher indications of achievement than the instruction objectives received. Also, individual teaching situations may have caused attention to be focused on class management when teachers would have preferred it focused on instruction.

Investigations about the importance of objectives and their subsequent degree of achievement may lead to revision of expected competencies for student teachers. The current study suggests a conflict of priorities among those involved in the student teaching experience. A focus by student teachers, cooperating teachers, and university supervisors on the objectives deemed important to achieve should enhance the experience. Studying the relationships of perceptions among triad groups is an important area of research for colleges and universities if student teaching is to maintain its high standing in education curriculums.

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Table 1

Mean Ranks of Triad Groups

Importance of Objectives

Triad Group	Instruction	Management	Growth
Student Teachers	6.7	8.5	10.6
Cooperating Teachers	7.0	7.5	10.3
University Supervisors	5.6	10.3	10.0

Table 2

Mean Ranks of Triad Groups

Achievement of Objectives

Triad Group	Instruction	Management	Growth
Student Teachers	9.1	7.8	6.4
Cooperating Teachers	9.1	6.1	8.0
University Supervisors	9.9	5.5	7.3